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Things We Want to Know By Bertram D. Wolfe

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INTRODUCTION

A brain-worker, well paid, boasting a home, car, and many other luxuries, but troubled by the decay of the social system which still provides him individually with those comforts, wrote a letter to the **Workers Age** raising a number of crucial questions which bother him and bother the whole group of awakening intellectuals which he represents.

These questions were answered in the columns of the **Age**. The series aroused widespread interest and comment, and hundreds of requests for back copies, elaboration of certain points and the reprinting of the questions and answers in more permanent form.

The intense interest awakened by the letter and answers proved that the questions were vital ones. They raise issues which trouble thousands of thoughtful persons today, persons who have become aware of the misery and decay surrounding them, who sense the doom of the system under which mankind has lived for several centuries, but who are oppressed with doubts as to the movement and philosophy which profess to offer a way out of the morass of capitalist decline. They are critical minds that refuse to approach Communism as a new religion to be followed blindly. They quite properly reserve the right to question, to doubt, to demand rational explanation and to be intellectually convinced before they throw themselves "heart and soul", i.e. intellectually as well as emotionally, into the struggle for a more decent and more rational social order.

The answers to the questions raised in the letter are distinguished by their frank meeting of issues and recognition of difficulties, their patient explanation and rational appeal to the most critical intellect, their earnest sense of conviction and unassailable logic. The **Workers Age** republishes this material in pamphlet form convinced that it is thereby contributing to the clarification of the minds of thousands who share the doubts of the original questioner.

—The Editors.

THINGS WE WANT TO KNOW

The Questions

Editor, the Workers Age:

"We" are Bourgeoisie, according to your classification, I presume. At any rate, we aren't exactly members of the proletariat, and God knows we're a long way from being Capitalists. We number many millions, and that is the only reason I presume to inflict my problem on you. As an individual I possess no importance; as a typical representative of my class I serve to exemplify and illustrate this problem, to which you offer a possible answer. In order to simplify procedure, I shall try to summarise it in a series of questions—with attendant data.

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1. AM I BOURGEOIS? My father was a laboring man, but I have achieved a certain financial success. I have an excellent position with a big corporation, which pays me an adequate salary. I have a nice home, a car and many minor luxuries. BUT I have nothing except my salary; no unearned income—no investments—no real estate. I work for my living.

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2. IS THERE A PLACE FOR ME IN THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT? Do you really want me? I am swinging steadily toward the Left, though I am still a long distance away from you. I used to be a stalwart Republican. Then I voted for Roosevelt. Last election I voted for Norman Thomas for Senator (my first Socialist ballot.) Next time I may possibly vote a straight Socialist ticket. I am interested in your movement. I subscribe for a couple of Communist papers and magazines. I suppose I'm becoming a "Liberal Bourgeois," but unlike you, I see no stigma in the word "Liberal." I'm rather proud of it, in fact.

3. WHAT SACRIFICES MUST I MAKE IF I JOIN YOU? If you accomplish your revolution must I forfeit those luxuries to which I am accustomed? Can I qualify for proletarian privileges, since I do not work with my hands? I belong to a class which certainly caught Hell in Russia. I wonder what will happen to my class here.

* * *

4. MUST I SWALLOW YOUR DOGMA WHOLE, IF I AM ACCEPTED? I admire your ideals and your motives, but honestly you frequently remind me of a pack of religious fanatics. You surround every word of Marx and Lenin with the same aura that the priest-hood instils in the words of Jesus. You confound your opponents by triumphantly shouting, "But Marx said . . ." or "But Lenin held . . ." And you know damned well you do. Your papers and magazines are full of examples. It sounds exactly like a revivalist sanctimoniously announcing that the cynic is confounded by "the Word of God HIMSELF." And somehow I doubt if either of your idols ever held himself up as omniscient or omnipotent. I admire them both too much to think they were that conceited. Are you going to expel me if I arise in meeting and sacrilegiously answer: "I know Lenin said that—but I think he was wrong."

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5. MUST I KEEP SILENT ABOUT THINGS THAT I REALLY DOUBT? For years you've been trumpeting that "War is at Hand." You sound like Hoover declaring that "Prosperity is just around the corner." You've painted this world conflict as a matter of days and weeks. You're still shouting the warning—and I suppose if you keep it

up long enough you're bound to be right some day. Then I'll have to listen to your eternal, "We told you so." Now please don't evade this. If you're honest you'll admit that you have repeatedly given the impression that War was so close you could touch it. And you're already about seven years behind with your prophecy. How come you were wrong? Please explain.

* * *

6. MAY I QUESTION YOUR CONSISTENCY? You encourage pacifism but you don't practice it by a long sight. You send agitators up to City College to incite school boys to resist military training—and in Russia you slap that same kind of boys into the ranks and teach them how to handle a rifle. If you are in earnest in desiring an armed revolution, why don't you urge those lads to learn all they can about weapons, so that they'll be worth something to you when trouble starts? I can't see your position here with a telescope. You seem to be fattening up a fine mess of sheep for a bloody slaughter. If you have your way, when you stage your revolution those kids that followed your advice will be soft picking for their class-mates who resisted your teachings and learned how to handle a machine gun.

* * *

Furthermore you carefully preach the doctrine that the building up of military machines is a certain cause of War. You say you are opposed to War per se. But Russia builds the greatest military machine of modern times and yet you deny that that is provocative of War. We can't analyse motives in a case of that kind. Why not frankly admit that your policy leads to War and you think that War justifiable? I'd like you better if you did.

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7. WHY DO YOU TALK ABOUT DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT, WHEN YOU MEAN DICTATORSHIP OF THE CONTROLLING FACTION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY?

Or do you mean it? Perhaps I don't exactly understand your terminology. I was frankly baffled by Will Herberg's

reference to "the position of the proletariat in the midst of the non-proletarian toiling masses," in the Workers Age of Dec. 15, 1934. Aren't those non-proletarian toiling masses a part of the proletariat? The terms seems as incongruous to me as "non-profit-making Capitalism." I thought the proletariat was, roughly speaking, composed of the mass of the workers and I don't see how "toiling masses" can be non-proletarian. I turn to the Manifesto and discover that Marx and Engels referred to the proletariat simply as "the modern working class, the class of those who can live so long as their work increases capital."

But, at any rate, doesn't your dictatorship in practice come down to an Oligarchy of Communist leaders, who decide as conscientiously as possible, what is best for the masses and then force their decision down the throats of those masses? If so, must I swallow a lot of twaddle about proletarian dictatorship as such, or may I frankly announce that I don't think the working masses have sufficient brains and experience to plan a constructive future for themselves and that it's a damn good thing for them to have some intelligent leaders (imbued with high ideals) dictating to them? Will you toss me out on my neck if I confess to holding such an opinion?

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8. ISN'T THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH A SYSTEM, UNDER WHICH LEADERS OF SUCH PROVEN ABILITY AS JAY LOVESTONE, LEON TROTSKY, M. N. ROY AND BERT WOLFE CAN BE TOSSED INTO THE DISCARD? If the system permitted them to be sacrificed once, how are you going to correct it to make such sacrifices impossible in the future? It is certainly wasteful to deny the movement the services of such men. Trotsky was good enough to be Lenin's right hand man. Surely he hasn't lost all the ability he once had. His exile reminds me of Hitler tossing out Einstein. I know you don't like Trotsky and I know why you object to him—but surely he has earned a right to present his

case in the land he helped to create. After all, perhaps he MIGHT be right. And Heaven knows the movement needs a man with Lovestone's intelligence. How can you justify a system which is capable of such mistakes? And, more important, how will you prevent their possibility in the future?

* * *

9. MUST I SUBSTITUTE A RED FLAG FOR THE STARS AND STRIPES? Now, don't laugh at me. This is serious to me and to millions of others. Don't sneer at symbolism. You cheer your own Red Flag, don't you? Well, I love mine, too. My father, grandfather and great-grandfather all fought for it. I wore the uniform myself. I'll readily grant you that most of the things it stood for have been dragged in the gutter. You don't have to give me a lecture on the evils of Capitalism. I've seen 'em. I know 'em. But my flag has a revolutionary tradition much older than yours. It originally stood for liberty and freedom and equality of opportunity—and to my mind it still does. I'll gladly join in any movement to purge it of its stains but I'd like to preserve it.

Nationalism, you say? Obsolete, you declare? Perhaps—but I'm sincere. Strange to say, I love my country—still do in spite of all the things that have happened in her. And you'll have a Devil of a time winning my support if you spit on my flag. If we must fight for freedom, why won't you let us damnable Liberals do it under our own colors?

* * *

10. WHY AREN'T YOU MORE BROAD-MINDED? Why don't you give credit to the conscientious Liberal leaders, who are sincerely doing the best they can? Instead of cursing them out as traitors, why don't you march with them in United Front, as far as they'll go and then push on as you see fit? I've no use at all for the Hoovers and Mellons, the Farleys and Currys—but I'm certain that men like Norris and LaGuardia and Wheeler and LaFollette are honestly doing the best they know how to make an impossible situation as tolerable as possible. You have a perfect right to question their judgment, but I'd like you better if you'd give them

credit occasionally for good intentions.

* * *

11. WHY INSULT MY INTELLIGENCE WITH SUCH AN ARGUMENT AS YOU PRESENTED IN THE LAST PARAGRAPH OF THE "RED TERROR" EDITORIAL IN A RECENT WORKERS AGE? I can't see any "accurate and complete justice" in the executions that followed the Kiroff murder, if, as I understand there were no trials. The USSR branded the victims as White Guards, etc. How do I know they were? The same officials branded Jay Lovestone as a renegade to the working class. Maybe there was no more justification for the one charge than the other. In fact, sympathetic as I usually am with your arguments, it looks to me in my neutral bystander capacity as if Norman Thomas won the debate on that subject. Perhaps I lack sufficient data, but I'd like to see some proof that these victims were traitors to Communism and not merely gents who happened to be persona non grata to the ruling powers in the Soviet Union.

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12. MUST I ADVOCATE MASS PICKETING AND MASS DEMONSTRATIONS IF I GO ALONG WITH YOU? Perhaps I will—but only if you will permit me to point out that their sole purpose is to create turmoil, confusion and riots. They may constitute justifiable strategy, if your purpose is to create martyrs and precipitate struggle—but I've never seen such a demonstration yet that was not deliberately intended to harry police and public authorities. Consequently I refuse to join in any crocodile tears shed over the denial of the God-given right to picket.

I must confess that I've seen New York policemen go through Hell in some of those demonstrations. I've seen them stand like statues, rigid under discipline, while the crowd surged around cursing and shouting and spitting in their faces; sticking pins in the horses of the mounted men; waving fists beneath the blue coats' noses and "demonstrating" to the limit, until finally the word was given to clear the streets. And I've not been greatly surprised at the resulting Cossack charge. (I think I'd have felt the

same myself.) Isn't it true that your own tactics sometimes cause the very abuses you denounce?

* * *

13. AND JUST HOW FAR DOES COMMUNIST DISCIPLINE GO? Many of you have been expelled because you refused to let some Official Party CCC do your thinking for you. Well, how much lee-way are you going to give me, if I join your ranks? If I happen to think the Lundeen Bill unfeasible, will you expel me if I rise and so state in my Party Fraction, after the Party Powers That Be have given it their blessing? (Understand, I don't say I'll oppose it outside the ranks, but can I holler my head off inside, as loud and as often and as enthusiastically as I choose? I know the Official Party won't let me. Will you?)

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14. WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

L'Envoi

You will note that I'm not asking for much information concerning your basic beliefs and policy. That is due to the fact that I'm ready to accept most of them. I'm fully conscious of the defects of our capitalist system. I'd like to see SOMETHING done about it. But, bad as it is, I want to make sure that you have

something constructive to offer before I join you in any destruction. Bad as it is, I think it could be worse. I don't want to make a mistake.

I'm willing to make any reasonable sacrifices. I'm willing to give up my car and chauffeur and put my wife to doing her own housework, if, by so doing, I can help put an end to the stark misery and suffering that I see all around me. I'm willing to forego my little luxuries if you can guarantee necessities to the poor devils that have nothing. I'm perfectly sincere in that.

But I'd hate to merely change task masters. I'd hate to merely change nomenclatures. I'm a little afraid that, as soon as your revolution gets going, the Jim Watsons and Jim Farleys and John Currys and Jimmy Hineses will hop on your band-wagon, out-yell you and snatch the leadership of your howling mobs. (They've had plenty of experience in swaying mass sentiment. They know the trick.)

And, Boy, I'm going to feel like Hell if I join your Revolution and wake up after its over to find Commissar Jim Farley appointing Comrade Al Goldman in charge of the Postal Trust.

—SELAH.

Chapter I

THE INTELLECTUAL AND THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

(Answers to Questions 1, 2 and 3)

When you call yourself "bourgeois" you flatter your income and slander your social role. You do not own for a living; you work for a living. You belong neither to the leisure class, nor to the exploiting class. You belong, despite your "adequate salary," your "nice home," and your car, to those who must sell their abilities, their labor of hand or brain, to the owners of the means of production in order to live. You, yourself, have stated the case with perfect clarity when you say: "But I have nothing except my salary; no assured income—no investments—no real estate.

I work for my living."

It is not we Communists who call "intellectuals" or brain workers "bourgeois." That is just one of the illusions that so many better-paid brain workers like to nourish—that they are not workers but capitalists. (Bourgeois and capitalist, as scientific terms, are roughly interchangeable). And if you think illusions as to your role in society, a bourgeois outlook or ambitions, make you a capitalist, then that is a position you would have to share with a large section of the American working class, since the wide spread of bourgeois ideas

among wage workers is one of the signs of the backwardness of the American workers. "Bourgeois ideas with proletarian pocket books" would characterize many Americans who are bourgeois only in prejudices, illusions, and dreams.

If that adequate salary of yours gives you illusions, it should sober you to think how many people with "adequate salaries" have seen them become inadequate, even vanish altogether, during the depression. As you watch them go in endless procession, you can say to yourself: "There, but for the grace of economic accident, go I." And was it not your class, or rather group, the intellectuals, who were most desperately ruined by inflation in Germany? In these days of "boloney dollars" and cuts in gold content, do you still think the American dollar immune from inflation? Where the dollar now bears the legend, "In God we Trust," will it be long before there will be graven in its place "I hope that my Redeemer liveth?" And those salaries without union organization, those fixed incomes of teachers and advertising men and efficiency experts and civil employees, those pensions and insurance policies and savings for "rainy days"—are not they precisely the sums that shrink to nothingness when consolidations and eliminations fly, when bankruptcies descend in torrents, and inflation makes 10,000 marks or dollars insufficient to buy a car ride or a postage stamp?

The size of your income is not decisive. The source of it, your manner of getting it, is. But if size fools you as to your real interests and social role, the times in which we live will take care of that. A few may escape. But that is social accident and not a basis for calculation. In times of social cataclysm, for your group as a whole there is no escape, no ivory tower or sheltered nook. Least of all for the more decent, and your very worries as raised in your letter "brand" you as one of the more decent and more conscious ones. Else you would not ask such questions. At any rate, we answer your first question pointblank: No, comrade brain worker, you are not a bourgeois.

A PLACE FOR YOU

Yes, there is a place for you in the Communist movement. We really want you. You can be useful to us. And we can be of use to you. Individually as "intellectuals" the Communist movement can develop that "intellect" on which your title as a group is based. And socially the victory of the movement can give security, scope, and future to your group, until the crippling separation into "hand work" and "brain work" is no more.

You again state your own case both well and ill: ill when you call yourself "liberal" and "liberal bourgeois," well when you say: "I am swinging steadily towards the Left, though I am still a long distance away from you."

"Swinging left" suggests movement, development, life. Being "liberal" means vacillating between two fixed points, and both in a void. Historically the liberal was the advocate of laissez faire, of freedom from government interference with the free development of the still progressive capitalist system. That was "Manchester liberalism": free trade, free competition, freedom of contract, freedom of enrichment and exploitation. In the days of monopoly, imperialism, and super-bureaucracy, that has turned into a reactionary dream. You abandoned that school of "liberalism" when you abandoned Hoover. And it had become nothing but a campaign phrase long before that. "Going left" is moving forward; such liberalism is looking back—and the Biblical parable is not amiss: When the time is come to leave Sodom and Gomorrah, those who look back will turn to . . . "liberals."

Or could you want to be one of those wishy-washy, gaseous vertebrates, not-here-not-there, on-the-one-hand-on-the-other-hand, we-welcome-we-deplore, there's-much-to-be-said-on-both-sides, seeing-two-sides-even-if-there's-only-one, liberals that wring their hands at workers and bosses (but especially at workers!) that scurry across no-man's land at zero hour and get in the way of both sides (but especially of the workers since all too often they have more influence there)? Read the Nation and the New

Republic—then read the **Workers Age**. If the former give you a mild pain in the neck (to put it politely) and you like the latter, as your remarks indicate, then you're insulting yourself to call yourself a "liberal" with or without the "bourgeois."

Of course, I can give you no guarantees. Hoover to Roosevelt, to Thomas, is a line of development. But if you stop there! Thomas is really a liberal thinly clad in ribbons of socialist phraseology. If your development stops there, you may turn out to be a liberal after all.

How much there will be a place for you in our movement depends largely upon you. There are intellectuals who come to us expecting to teach before they start to learn. Silver tongues and facile pens have all too easily won places of leadership for elements unripe and otherwise unfit. The Socialist Party has made lawyers, doctors, preachers, journalists, dentists into its general staff! It has rushed to nominate every latest "prominent" band-wagon jumper as spokesman and standard bearer. Charles Edward Russell, Alan Benson, Norman Thomas—typify men who have been made spokesmen before they knew what they were speaking for! What should have been the fruit of earnest labor, of years of serious study, of years of testing in struggle, was thrust upon them without labor, study, or testing. Russell and Benson are gone—back whence they came—and Thomas will never know beans about social science, about the Marxian foundations on which our movement is based. So you see, working class distrust of intellectuals is a healthy instinct. But for those who can really make the grade, prove their devotion, master our theory and practice, cut the navel string that binds them to their old views, connections, and prejudices, and prove themselves worthy of trust and the rights and duties of membership—for them we have a full comradely welcome, are ready to use their abilities to the full, and make no distinction as to origin and "previous condition." Why, Marx, Engels, Lenin (and since the party likes to mention

him in the same breath, I might add, Stalin) were all intellectuals in origin! Surely our movement found a place for them. But you must go the whole way—heart and head—loyalty and understanding and action, if you want equality (we offer neither more nor less) with the rest of us.

Nor do we agree with the present policy of the Official Communist Party or making special half-way houses for intellectuals—second-class parties with second-class citizenship, duties, but no rights, "thrills" but no genuine Communist activity. Those International Labor Defense branches, Friends of the Soviet Union ("Friends," but not Imitators, Soviet Union, but not Soviet America), Leagues Against War and Fascism, Pen-and-Hammer and John Reed Clubs, are not as they pretend to be, united fronts of working-class organizations for common aims, but Communist-controlled organizations for chronic sympathizers who are condemned to be incurable inmates of half-way houses, asylums for weak intellectuals who are discouraged from going the whole way, homes for weary wanderers, second-class parties for second-class citizens under control of a first-class fraction.

If you're worth your salt, you'll want full citizenship, as your next question shows.

* * *

PROMISES OF THE REVOLUTION

The revolutionary movement does ask sacrifices of you: time, energy, devotion, funds for the building of our press and movement, occupancy of an advanced place on the firing line of the class war.

Some men make history consciously, some dimly understand what is happening, and some just have it happen to them and don't know what struck them. But from history there is no escape. It "happens" to all of us.

We cannot promise you a picnic. But we do promise you an increase in self-respect and understanding, escape from the miserable role of puppet plaything of historical forces, development into a conscious contributor to the making of the history of your own time, a place of honor in the most significant task

that any living man with eyes to see, heart to feel, head to comprehend, guts to fight and muscle to carry out the dictates of eye, heart, and head, can possibly engage in.

You wonder what will happen to your luxuries after the revolution. I wonder what will happen to them before the revolution! And "after"? You can be conscripted for communal or public use, till there are cars enough to go round. That will not take long though. America isn't Russia—we will not have to industrialize a backward, peasant-economy. As Lenin recognized, it was easier for Russia to start a Socialist revolution but more difficult for it to continue and bring the building of Socialism to a successful conclusion. He was quick to acknowledge that "after the victory of the proletarian revolution in at least one of the advanced countries, things, will, in all probability, take a sharp turn, that is, Russia will cease to be the model country and once again become (in the 'Soviet' and socialist sense) a backward country."

Yet even with the marvelous mass-production capacities of the American belt-line, you can count on going without a private car for a while, and when and if you get one, you'll have to drive it yourself. You can certainly count on being without a chauffeur. You're not the kind to be bothered by that, I imagine. Your own letter says: "I'm willing to make any reasonable sacrifice. I'm willing to give up my car and chauffeur and

put my wife to doing her own housework, if, by so doing, I can help to put an end to the stark misery and suffering that I see all around me."

But you can "qualify for proletarian privileges," as your question puts it, even though you do not "work with your hands." Brain-workers, doctors, teachers, engineers, journalists, if they are with progress and not against it, will find themselves part of the new ruling class, the workers, as they never were of the old. Those who "caught hell" in Russia, tried to raise hell first. It was the deliberate sabotage of great sections of the intelligentsia, as the Russians call you, that increased the difficulties of the new regime and reaped the whirlwind of its own sowing. As to what will happen to your "class" here, it depends in large measure on what your "class" does here. Those who raise hell will no doubt get it. Those who help along will be as good as the best.

Ultimately the professions you and your fellows represent will have a new meaning and a new dignity in a new society where human dignity will take precedence over the ever-present queries of today: "Can I make money out of him?"; "Is there money in it?"; "You are getting paid for it, aren't you?" and all the rest of the degrading formulas that prostitute intellect as they sacrifice physical strength and skill on the altar of that insatiable Moloch, Almighty Dollar.

Chapter II

COMMUNISM AND DOGMA

(Answer to Question 4)

You are right about Marx and Lenin—neither of them ever set up to be omniscient or omnipotent. When Marx looked upon some of those calling themselves Marxists, he exclaimed: "I am no Marxist." He and Engels were never tired of declaring to their comrades-in-arms, "our theory is no dogma but a guide to action."

Marxism is not a creed to be memorized, a litany to be recited on state occasions, nor a universal key that unlocks all doors and solves all problems without the trouble of thought. It is a method to be mastered and applied in action. And it is an accumulated and accumulating body of knowledge acquired by the application of that method to the prob-

lems posed to contemporary man by nature and society.

As a method its core lies in the conception of life as something fluid, changing, in process, as a ceaseless transformation of all things, now slowly and gradually, now rapidly and abruptly, from what they were into what they will be next.

Further, Marxist method demands realism, concreteness, recognition of the infinite variety, the manifold complexity, and specific peculiarity and "sly trickiness" of every particular instance, concrete institution, specific moment, and actual problem. Surely there is no room for dogmatism, universal solve-alls, and sterile creed-reciting in such a method.

As a concrete body of knowledge, Marxism represents the accumulated and accumulating results of the application of that method to the analysis of the world in which we live, and especially, to society. Its method is a scientific method raised to the highest level that human thought and methodology have so far attained. Its accumulated and accumulating knowledge is providing a sociology or science of society, which is so much the science of society, that its opponents bend all their efforts to "proving" that no science of society is possible, for they have nothing to offer in its place.

Yet even that accumulated body of knowledge is not static, fixed, unalterable. For is it not knowledge of a world in flux? Is it not changing and growing knowledge of a changing world, of a world which we seek to change further, and is not acquired by a method that has the concept of change as the very heart of it? Surely, no room for dogmatism here!

Your suspicious attitude towards "quotations from a sacred text" is a healthy one. Thus when the Daily Worker writes as it did a short time ago: "Alexander Bittleman is writing a book in which he will prove by copious quotations from Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin that America will develop along a revolutionary path," the very announcement unconsciously condemns the book as rabbinical talmudism or priestly exegetics,

as something utterly alien to the spirit and method of Marxism.

But so far your attitude is healthy only in a negative sense, healthy as a negative reaction to the religious use of sacred texts, to the cramping and hog-tying of thought, investigation and experiment, by the dead hand of past authority and dogma. Yet you cannot stop there, for you are in danger of "throwing out the baby along with the dirty bath water."

THE ROLE OF AUTHORITY

In our zeal to react against cramping dogma, we must not work ourselves into the impossible situation where we dare not examine the thought of great thinkers, the achievements of great scientists. No one can study biological evolution today and make any contributions to its further elucidation, without mastering the contribution of Darwin, Mendel, Lamarck, Weissman, Morgan, Mueller, etc. What they say is not decisive and final but vastly important. So one cannot be an active worker in the field of social science today without mastering the contributions of Marx and Engels and Lenin and other Marxists. Not to "prove" things a la Bittleman with quotations. What the great founders of modern social science have to say is not decisive and final, but vastly important. Even the Encyclopedia Britannica (of all places!) has come grudgingly to recognize that:

"It is an exaggeration of the theory which makes it an explanation of all human life, but the whole science of dynamic sociology rests upon the postulate of Marx." (Encyclopedia Britannica, 13th edition, article on "History").

To sum up, we Communists do not approve of the dogmatic use of authority as a substitute for observation, as a ham-stringer of thinking, as a sacred text. But neither do we reject out-of-hand the authority of the leading thinkers and discoverers in the field of social science, nor seek originality just for its own sake on the basis of our own puny individual powers starting from scratch. Knowledge is cumulative, building upon the past, but perpetually renews itself out

of the fountain of the living present. The problem is to select the best authorities, and to use them as an aid to the further development of our science; to climb on the shoulders of these giants so that we can see as far as they, and perhaps a little beyond. Used in that sense, the gigantic figures of Marx and Engels and Lenin will give man a lift for a long time to come.

From these few remarks, it will be clear that no healthy Communist movement would expel any one for getting up

at a meeting, as you suggest, and declaring. "I know Lenin said that—but I think he was wrong."

Of course, such remarks would not help much unless they were supplemented by an analysis of why you thought his views on that point were wrong, and what was wrong about them. If you did that, you would be a really useful member of our movement. And if it turned out that you were wrong, you might learn something, and become a more useful member of our movement, anyhow.

Chapter III

COMMUNISM AND WAR

(Answers to Questions 5 and 6)

You charge us Communists with exaggerating the danger and nearness of war. It cannot be exaggerated, for we are in a period of growing international antagonisms and mounting war preparations. Armies are bigger, guns more powerful, fleets larger, gases more destructive, planes more numerous, plans more complete, peace talk more alarmingly frequent, than in 1913 on the eve of the last war. Even the politicians at the head of governments are forced to admit that now.

We foresaw it a little earlier? Warned a little earlier? What would you have us do? Close our eyes to the war preparations? Miss the significance of all the peace talk? Go to sleep until war actually breaks out? Leave the working class unprepared and unforewarned? On the contrary, our analysis enabled us to foresee it. Our obligation is to carry on a consistent and persistent day to day campaign to explain, to enlighten, to expose, and to struggle against each step in war preparations. Only thus can we build up the understanding and organization necessary to avert or postpone war. And failing that, only thus can we develop the mass organization necessary to utilize the war situation, to put a revolutionary end to the war and the war-making system.

But you are wrong in thinking that we

have exaggerated the nearness of war, pretended to establish an exact date. We are not fortune tellers. We can foresee what is coming. But no man can tell exactly when it is coming. Certainly, we have never pretended to.

I think I have written more on war than any other Communist in America. I wrote a series on war in 1928 when I was editor of the *Communist* and director of the propaganda department of the official Communist Party. I wrote another in 1930 when I was associate editor of the *Revolutionary Age* (today *Workers Age*), organ of the Communist Party (Opposition). These writings are neither untypical nor unrepresentative. Examine them and see whether your implied charges are justified.

Take the series in the *Age*, entitled "The Next War". They were alarming enough in all conscience and intended to be so, for the facts they narrated were alarming. But this is what I wrote about the menace of war:

"Under capitalism war is inevitable. The coming madness is being prepared with headlong speed. It may come tomorrow or be delayed a decade, just as the war of 1914-1918 was brewing from the beginning of the century and nearly began several times before it broke out." (*Revolutionary Age*, Vol. 1, Number 13, May 1, 1930).

And two years earlier in the series on war published in 1928 I wrote:

"Our struggle against war does not blind us to the fact that war may break out in the long run in spite of our struggle, because the very nature of imperialism is such as to make war inevitable until imperialism and capitalism are overthrown. But the struggle against war can give us a chance to strengthen our forces and build up today a powerful opposition to war at home and in other imperialist countries, as well as strengthen the Soviet Union." (The Communist, July, 1928, Vol. VII, Number 7, Page 463.)

Does that sound like exaggeration and alarmism or sober realism and common sense?

ABOUT PACIFISM

Now as to our tactics. You charge that "we encourage pacifism". We do not. Again a quotation will clinch the point:

"Only under the leadership of the working class can a real struggle against war be conducted. The liberals such as Wheeler, Borah, etc., delude with Congressional investigations . . . (you can now add the Norris munitions investigation) and cause the protests of the masses to evaporate in wordy phrases and thoroughly dangerous pacifist illusions." (Communist, July 1928, Vol. VII, Number 7, page 461).

You charge us with being "against war per se". We have never said so. We are in favor of a revolutionary war for the freedom of India and Ireland as Marx favored the Northern side in the Civil War for the abolition of slavery, and as we would have supported the war for American independence in 1776. In each war our attitude is determined by the social significance and class forces involved. We oppose all imperialist war; we support wars for freedom, we are ready to defend the worker's government in Russia, as we would be ready to defend a worker's government in America, with our lives. I don't know where you could have gotten an impression to the contrary. Certainly our press has tried to make that clear. Can it be that you are mixing Communist writing with

those you have seen in liberal, pacifist, and socialist press, as your letter previously confused liberalism, communism and Norman Thomasism? Take these words for example:

"In a country like China, where war rages between revolution and counter-revolution (I wrote this in 1928) the slogan 'Peace', without the previous victory of the struggle of the masses against imperialism, has a definitely counter-revolutionary meaning. We do not wish peace for imperialism in China and peace for Chinese enslavement. We wish victorious revolutionary war." Communist, Vol. VII, Number 9, page 579-580).

Is that not clear enough? And this?

"We Communists do not fight against war 'in general'. We fight against imperialist and counter-revolutionary war but support and lead revolutionary wars of the proletariat and nationalist wars of oppressed nations." (Communist, Nov. 1928, Vol. VII, Number 11, page 714).

Certainly you cannot accuse us of inconsistency or unclarity here.

AS TO MILITARISM

You write that we "carefully preach the doctrine that the building up of military machines is a certain cause of war". Once more a single quotation is sufficient to clear up a misunderstanding:

"There are those who believe that the war preparations are bringing on the war, that the cause of war is preparedness. That is like the argument that it rains because people take umbrellas out into the street. Preparedness is a symptom of the approach of war not the cause of its approach. When we see governments preparing for war we can know that they are expecting war, that war is on the way!" (Revolutionary Age, I, 18. August 1, 1930).

Why do we oppose war preparations in America? Because we know that each expenditure is a step in preparing imperialist war. Because we know that the terrific arms expenditure, over \$800,000,000 acknowledged outlay for this year without counting the PWA and other concealed appropriations, puts a

heavy burden on the people and misuses funds that might be more usefully employed in fighting disease, relieving unemployment distress, in education (while schools are closing for lack of funds the armament expenditures have mounted steadily each year and are the highest of any country in the world). Because we know that the armaments are to be used by an imperialist government for imperialist purposes which we reject. Because we know that a heavily armed imperialist power curbs freedom at home as part of its war preparations and uses its armed forces to break strikes and crush workers organizations. And so on.

Then why are we opposed to militarization of our high schools and colleges? Because, in addition to the reasons already given, we know that the main function of that playing at soldiering, for it is mere playing at soldiering, is propagandistic, the development of the war spirit, psychology and morale among the youth of the land.

Still you object, and your next objection is important. You write: "If you are in earnest in desiring an armed revolution, why don't you urge those lads to learn all they can about weapons, so that they'll be worth something when the trouble starts."

Here again a quotation will clarify matters. In an article entitled "The Next War: What's To Be Done" I wrote:

"And if, in spite of our efforts, war does come—and the likelihood is great—then we must go into the armies, into the factories, and continue our fight against war There is no other way out of the war and the war system, no shorter road, no easier way.

"The master class will put us in charge of artillery and tanks and planes and ships. They will put machine guns and gas grenades and bayonets in our hands. And they will bid us use them against our fellow-workers, to destroy factories, wipe out cities, ruin farmlands, annihilate the physical basis of modern production and culture, and murder each other by millions and tens of millions.

"We cannot avoid it by refusing to take the guns, by individual acts of hero-

ism and resistance. 'An oppressed class which does not learn the use of arms, to possess them and to become practised in them, is only fit to be oppressed and handled like slaves.' (Lenin). We must take the guns and gas grenades and bayonets, and use them, not on each other to wipe out mankind, but we must use them upon the greedy madmen who drive us into war, use them to destroy the profit-hunting, man-slaying, unemployment-and-war-breeding, capitalist system, and build a decent human world where human lives are valued higher than dollars, and exploitation, unemployment and war are unknown." (Revolutionary Age, Vol. II, No. 22, May 1, 1931).

RUSSIA'S ARMY

Why then do we favor military preparedness in the Soviet Union? The answer is clear. The Soviet Union is no imperialist power. It enslaves no colonial land. It has opened wide the gates of the Czarist prison house of peoples. It is a free union of free people. It seeks neither profits nor colonies anywhere in the world. It has abolished capitalism. It is building socialism. In it the workers rule. Its Red Army is not, to use your phrase, "provocative of war." It is a deterrent of war. It is the defender of the only land where the war-making system has been abolished.

One last quotation: After the passage cited above which begins "We Communists do not fight against war 'in general'," follows another which reads:

"Neither are we against armies and the military 'in general'. On the contrary, we are in favor of the working class obtaining military knowledge, but for their own aims and not those of the bourgeoisie. Whilst we carry on a determined fight against bourgeois armies and bourgeois militarism, we are in favor of a proletarian militia . . . and of the proletarian Red Army. . .

"The Red Army is not a 'Russian Army'; neither is it merely an army of the Soviet Union, but since this is the fatherland of all workers of all countries (the beginning of a workers' world), it is an army of the internation-

al proletariat." (Communist, Vol. VII, pp. 714, 715.)

TOWARDS A WORKERS WORLD

"Why not admit," you conclude, "that your policy leads to War and that you think that War justifiable? I'd like you better if you did."

I have already admitted, nay insisted that we consider wars for freedom, war for defense of the Soviet Union, justifiable. However, I deny that our policy "leads to War". The Soviet Union has amply proved that it is following an insistent, earnest, tireless policy of peace. Therein it has earned the gratitude of the masses, the "common people", of all lands. We are no less tire-

less in our opposition to war in our own country. It means untold misery for the many, bloodstained profits for the few. We desire to change the world. But we do not worship violence. We should prefer to change it peacefully. But change it we must, for till we do we will stagger from depression to depression, be driven from war to war, until we abolish the root of depression and war, the profit system. There is no way out of the jungle of wars until that system is ended. Then we will have a warless world. Our policy is the only policy that leads to abiding peace on earth. If fight we must, and capitalism leaves no alternative, the struggle for that policy is the only war in which we are willing to enlist. How about you?

Chapter IV

DEMOCRACY AND DICTATORSHIP

(Answer to Question 7)

We Americans have been brought up to regard the term "Dictatorship" as a term of abuse rather than of political analysis. Just as we have been taught that "there are no classes in America" and no ruling class (in the land of the most open control of government by big business that has ever been known anywhere) so we are taught to think of the government or state as a mere expression of the undifferentiated and unanimous will of "the people" of a classless society. But as a matter of simple fact our government, like all governments throughout history, though it rests as far as possible on persuasion and unconscious and habitual acceptance, depends ultimately on courts, injunctions, police, prisons, national guard and armed forces, in short on force, for the preservation of the status quo, the maintenance of "law and order" (capitalist property law and the capitalist social order) and the continuance of the present property and class relationships. You do not even have to challenge the existing social order to have the government "crack down" on you. A mere strike for a

shorter workday, a few cents more pay, or union recognition, brings courts and police (clubs and injunctions) into action on behalf of the interests of the dominant class. And if the strike is of any magnitude, the national guard and the army (gas bombs, bayonets and machine guns) go into action as well. San Francisco, Toledo, Minneapolis, New Orleans, and the textile strike, to cite only a few instances of the past year, all give proof of that.

In this the United States is no exception. All the governments of the world, including England and France, Germany and Italy, the United States and the Soviet Union, are dictatorships in the sense (1) that they represent the dominance of some one class over the rest of society, (2) that they maintain and defend a given social order, (3) and that, while they use means of propaganda, education, and persuasion, they depend ultimately on force for their maintenance and the maintenance of the social order they represent. As Professor Laski aptly puts it in his latest book, *The State in Theory and Practice*: "So long as the

state expresses a society divided into economic classes, it is always the servant of that class which owns, or dominates the ownership of, the instruments of production."

The chief differences between the United States, England, Germany and Italy on the one hand, and the Soviet Union on the other, lies not in the fact of dictatorship in the sense of class rule, but in the question as to which class is the ruling class. In this sense, further, England, the United States, Germany and Italy, despite the differences in their state apparatus and forms, are all bourgeois or capitalist dictatorships. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, and it makes no bones about it, is a proletarian dictatorship—the working class owns the industries, controls the government (in alliance with these "non-proletarian toilers" you asked about) and runs the government in its own interests as a government over and against the interests of the remnants of the capitalist and feudal landowning classes in the Soviet Union and their supporters in other lands.

ON THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Of course, there are enormous and highly important differences in the forms that these various class dictatorships take.

Thus there are republics (France, the United States), monarchies (England, Italy). There are limited monarchies and absolute monarchies. England (with a king) and France (without one) have more "responsible" governments than the United States. The President of the United States has more economic and political power formally vested in him than the King of England or the President of France; or even, considering his freedom from legislative control and from the necessity to resign when outvoted, than the Prime Ministers of those countries. These things make important differences in the form of government, but obviously not in the essence of these governments, for all of them are capitalist governments.

Then there are survivals in some countries of feudal classes with privileges and powers directly defined by personal,

caste-status law as well as indirectly by property possession as with the British aristocracy, whereas in more thoroughly bourgeois countries, there is formal equality before the law and privileges and powers are determined exclusively by economic possession and property law. This country is not free from pre-capitalist laws, however, as proved by the existence of the semi-feudal share-cropper system in the South and the Jim-Crow laws which are personal-distinction laws surviving from the caste status of slavery. It is important to fight for the elimination of all these pre-capitalist survivals, king, lords, share-cropper system, etc., yet if they are all eliminated, you still have nothing more than pure capitalist government with that formal equality before capitalist law which Anatol France so neatly satirized with his famous aphorism:

"The Law in its majestic Equality forbids the Rich as well as the Poor to sleep under bridges and beg their bread from door to door."

WHAT ABOUT DEMOCRACY?

It is also true that in America, as in England and France, there is the opportunity for great numbers of people (all those adults who can afford a settled residence in some states and in others all who can pay a certain poll tax) to vote every so often as to which particular group of persons are to adopt laws compatible with the general constitution of capitalist society, and enforce capitalist law and maintain the capitalist order. But it is obvious that this is really an opportunity to choose within the narrow limits indicated above, and to choose between two parties both of which are for capitalism and both of which are controlled by big contributors. Moreover, under capitalism, not merely campaign funds and party machines of the big parties, but also big newspapers, the radio and other organs for forming public opinion, are controlled directly and indirectly by big business. Consequently, democracy, in capitalist countries, is really, despite thin disguises, easily recognizable as capitalist democracy, i.e. democracy for the capitalist class in determining its own class policies and its

manner of controlling the working class. This does not obviate the fact that such democracy for the capitalist class is at the same time dictatorship over the working class.

In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, there is also an interplay of dictatorship and democracy. There it is a question of democracy not for a small minority, but for the great majority, and of dictatorship, not over the great majority, but over a small minority. Incidentally, the forms of proletarian democracy are also superior: election directly from factories, regiments, collective farms; the requirement that soviet delegates report frequently to their constituents, must accept instructions as to how to vote (imperative mandate), are subject to recall at any time, etc. It is because Soviet democracy is democracy for the great majority that it can so frankly avow its character as a dictatorship (of the proletariat) over the small minority (the old possessing classes). And it is because American democracy is really a democracy for a handful that it must conceal as far as possible its character as dictatorship of that handful of money kings over the great majority and use all the arts of hypocrisy, miseducation, and befuddlement, to conceal its character as a dictatorship (of the bourgeoisie) over the great majority (the workers and working farmers).

AS TO FASCISM

Still the matter of relative preservation of democratic forms and civil liberties, however, meager and insubstantial, is important in capitalist countries. In proportion as capitalism decays, in that proportion it destroys even that limited capitalist democracy and its limited bourgeois democratic liberties, in favor of purely autocratic, personal, naked dictatorship, dictatorship a la Mussolini and Hitler. Here even the capitalist parties must go out of business, and to preserve its economic power and privileges the capitalist class gives up even its own democracy to a set of hired bullies under a personal autocrat. If capitalist democracies smash strikes, capitalist autocracies of the Hitler type smash all trade unions. Still capitalist democracies

and capitalist autocracies have this essential feature in common, as have capitalist monarchies and capitalist republics, namely, that they are all varying forms, better or worse forms, of the dictatorship of the capitalist class.

And one more important difference. Capitalist dictatorships aim to keep the subject class permanently subject. But proletarian dictatorships aim to eliminate the roots of their subject classes, wipe out all class distinctions and build a classless society where no class dictatorship is necessary or possible.

CLASS AND PARTY

From what I have said so far, you can see that we mean dictatorship of the proletariat, not dictatorship of the Communist Party. Where then do parties come in?

A class cannot rule directly, every member of it, every day, saying his say on every question as it comes up, and every member of it devoting his full time to politics and government. Each class develops its own party or parties, a vanguard of its most politically conscious and politically active members. In America this is partially concealed by the fact that both major parties are parties of the same class, serve the interests of the same class and often of the same section of it (that's why the Duponts can divide the members of their family between the two parties). And both parties hypocritically pretend to be the party of all classes. That helps to explain the incredible unprincipledness, hypocrisy, and corruption of American political life. It also explains the confusion that makes farm-blocs and labor blocs, on a class basis, cut across party lines. In France, on the other hand, each party and there are many, is a little more specific as to program and as to which class it represents. The Communist Party makes no pretense to being a classless party. It is the party of the working class. Its platform is insistently, unequivocally clear; the overthrow of capitalism, the rule of the workers, the establishment of a new social order. It appeals to other classes oppressed by the same financial dictatorship, only insofar as it believes and can demonstrate, that

the victory of the working class will also aid poor farmers and other oppressed sections of the population.

"NON-PROLETARIAN TOILERS"

That brings me to your question about Herberg's formula: "the position of the proletariat in the midst of the non-proletarian toiling masses." The proletarian is the worker proper, he who does not own his means of production but must sell his ability to labor, his hand and brain, to the owners of the means of production. The non-proletarian toiling masses include artisans who own their own tools and means of production and work for customers or the market, peasants and poor farmers who own their own land, etc. They must still toil to live, but they live by ownership of their means of production and by self-controlled labor. In Russia, they form the vast majority of the population, and the proletariat has the special problem of winning and keeping their confidence, of serving their interests as well as its own. That is why the Soviet government has often been called a dictatorship of workers and peasants, of the workers supported by and allied with the peasantry.

AS TO BUREAUCRACY

In view of all the above, it is obvious that the proletariat, and in a more limited sense the peasantry, exercise their

dictatorship through the vehicle of the Soviet government, and under the leadership of the Communist Party. But the authority of the party is grounded not in coercion, but in mass confidence and mass support. The Party must judge the needs of the masses well, express them adequately, be linked up inseparably with the masses, constantly recruit their best and most advanced elements, deserve their confidence and win it afresh each day, by every move, for every proposal, for every action.

For this reason the party needs to explain not command, when dealing with the class it represents. It needs to preserve democracy within its own ranks and democracy for the masses within the government it leads.

I do not wish to conceal the fact that certain bureaucratic weaknesses have crept into the inner party life of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and even, tho much less so, certain bureaucratic weaknesses in the democracy for the masses afforded by the Soviet government or proletarian dictatorship.

But with all those defects, the Soviet government is not merely a government, the only government, in the interests of, for and by the masses, but it is the widest, completest, most thorough going democracy in the world today.

Chapter V

ON EXPULSIONS AND PARTY CONTROVERSIES

(Answer to Question 8)

How do we justify the expelling of persons loyal to Communism and capable of furthering the development of our movement? We don't. If we could endorse such things we would not now be in the Communist Opposition. If the Communist International were today in a healthy condition, if it were based upon a sound structure of inner party democracy combined with centralized leadership and discipline in action, if it were not disrupted by factionalism, if it

possessed a collective leadership in place of a monopoly of leadership by the Russian party and an unhealthy tendency to personal monopoly of leadership within that party—undoubtedly the Communist International would have avoided many losses and defeats and would have been spared the disruptive crises of the last six years. In that case Jay Lovestone would no doubt be secretary of our party today and recognized as one of the outstanding leaders of the Communist

International and M. N. Roy, in his Indian prison, would be mentioned together with Thaelmann in every demand by Communist-controlled organizations for the release of our proletarian heroes from the bastilles of reaction. To the shame of our movement be it said that the petty vindictiveness of factional considerations even follows our members into the dungeon, and the International of revolution makes common cause with British imperialism in a conspiracy of silence to conceal the fact that the outstanding leader of the Indian revolution is lying helpless and ill in a jail in India!

HOW TO CORRECT IT

"How are you going to correct it?," you ask, "and make such sacrifice impossible in the future." No honest, thinking man will give you guarantee for the future of even the best movement—and, in our opinion, the Communist movement, even with all its defects, is the best movement in the world today.

But of this much you can be sure; The Communist Opposition has dedicated itself to the task of strengthening the Communist movement, of making it more fit for its large tasks, by fighting against such a state of affairs till they are corrected. History and the needs of our movement demand that the fight be fought and won. Recent developments give increasing evidence that it will be won. And when that fight is over, when inner party democracy has been restored, when a genuine world collective leadership has been developed, then such a crisis is far less likely to occur again. By making the present in proper fashion, man does what he humanly can to shape the future. To give other guarantees except those arising out of your own activity and the objective possibilities, is quackery or fortune-telling. You, and those like you, who want to see such things corrected, if your desires are not to remain mere impotent dreams, must join the Communist Opposition in its fight for Communist Unity and inner party democracy (these do not make up all but they do make up an important part of our aims), and thus help to

secure the kind of future for our movement that you desire. A Victory for the Communist Opposition would be the best, the only possible guarantee, that such things could not readily occur again.

Here I might stop, but your question really contains several other implications and issues that require analysis and answer. Especially there are two concealed questions: (1) Why are there such differences and divisions in the Communist movement? and (2) What is our attitude on Trotsky whose name is omitted from my discussion above? The second question I have taken up at length elsewhere (See, for example, the appendix on "Trotsky and Trotskyism" in "What is the Communist Opposition"—Workers Age Pub. Co., 15 cents). But both questions however briefly, should be answered here.

Many people are astonished, even alienated, by the sharp controversies that go on in the radical movement. But a little reflection will convince you that such controversy, within certain limits, is inevitable and necessary. All living organizations attempting to adapt themselves to a changing and complicated world and to solve daily new and hitherto unsolved problems, will naturally and inevitably develop much discussion, difference of opinion and controversy. The evil lies not in the discussion and difference of opinion. That is rather a sign of health—and of the complexity and constant alteration of the problems to be solved.

But the evil lies in the choking off of such discussion, the outlawry of serious earnest consideration of fundamentals, the artificial creation of differences, the substitution of abuse and excommunication for analysis and refutation, of compulsion for conviction, of dogmatic credo for scientific analysis, of churchly obedience for conscious understanding, of heat for light, of the dogma of the infallibility of the leader for the winning and ever fresh rewinning of leadership (i.e. acceptance of one's proposals) thru clarity and soundness, the splitting of the movement to avoid discussion, the substitution of considerations of face-saving for considerations of movement-

building, putting the desire to appear to have been right above the eagerness to be right and keep right, and if an error of judgment has been made, to correct it as quickly, openly and completely as possible.

Lenin, who differed both temperamentally and consciously from Stalin in this matter, summed up his view on the correction of errors in unforgettable words:

"The attitude of a political party toward its own mistakes is one of the most important and surest criteria of the seriousness of the party and of how it fulfills in practice its obligations towards its class and towards the toiling masses. To admit a mistake openly, to disclose its reasons, to analyze the conditions which gave rise to it, to study attentively the means of correcting it—these are the signs of a serious party. . . ."

Certainty, such methods of correcting errors, help, as you rightly demand, "to prevent their possibility in the future."

AS TO EXPULSIONS

We of the Communist Opposition are not against expulsions in principle. A voluntary movement has the right and duty to defend itself against infiltration by elements that do not agree with it in fundamentals, that refuse to carry out its basic decisions, or that discredit it and betray its basic aims.

Expulsions only become a sign of ill health when they are used to prevent analysis of realities and discussion of tactical questions, when expulsion is used against those who are loyal to the principles of Communism and willing to carry out the will of the majority after a fair discussion has been held, till another opportunity for discussion shall come.

Nor are ability and services to the movement in the past sufficient to justify present actions. To use an historic analogy, no one can deny that Benedict Arnold did heroic service in the revolutionary cause before he deserted it. So Lafayette, Mirabeau, Danton, led the early stages of the French Revolution till it went beyond their limited aims, and then they became its enemies. So too the revolutionary movement owes vast debts

to Kautsky and Plechanoff, yet both in later years became opponents of their own earlier words and deeds and the movement they had helped to build. No revolutionary leader can live on his past, but must win afresh each day his right to leadership and a belief in the correctness of his views. When he goes off the track, his very past reputation makes a former leader all the more dangerous.

So in the fact that Lovestone, Roy, Trotsky or Stalin served the revolution well yesterday, there is nothing which would prove conclusively that he is still correct and still serving well today. Therein lies one of the dangers in the Stalin cult, or Thaelmann cult.

The fact that Lovestone, Roy or Trotsky stands today expelled does not necessarily prove that any of them was right and unjustly handled (as your letter seems to imply), any more than it proves that he was wrong and justly handled as, official party members are taught to believe.

In the same way, the fact that Lenin before his death earnestly demanded the removal of Stalin as secretary of the Russian party is in itself no proof that he is not a good secretary today, any more than the fact that he is secretary today is in itself proof that he is the best possible or even a good secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Of course, a man's past is of some consequence in estimating his present and probably future, but his present is overwhelmingly more so.

AS TO TROTSKY

Now a word as to Trotsky. It would be outside the scope of this series to analyze his role in detail here. But this much at least should be said in answer to your question.

Trotsky's services to the Russian revolution are undeniable. It is truly shameful to see how attempts have been made to rewrite the history of the years 1917 to 1920 in such fashion as to omit the heroic pages that Trotsky inscribed there. To such depths does petty, shameless factionalism lead, to falsification of historical truth, to brazen forgery!

But no factionalism nor sycophancy of

professional adulators of Stalin and professional slanderers of his opponents, is capable of permanently beclouding the record of those years. It is Trotsky's own actions of today that are cancelling out his merits of yesterday. It is the Trotsky of today that is the enemy of what the Trotsky of yesterday contributed to the proletarian cause.

Trotsky, like Stalin, tried to build an international faction as a tail to his aims in the Russian Party. Both were ready to disrupt the world communist movement for the sake of victory in that controversy. But in their differences on industrialization, attitude towards the peasantry, estimate of the present stage of the Russian revolution and its tasks in relation to the world revolution, Stalin was in the main overwhelmingly right and Trotsky overwhelmingly wrong.

This is not said to justify in any way the shameful factional treatment and deportation of Trotsky meted out by Stalin and his faction. The writer of these lines, when serving as representative to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in 1929, on being asked to express his opinion on the proposed deportation of Trotsky, recorded his vote against it. (To my chagrin I learned that Trotsky had already been secretly deported at the time the sham "consultative vote" was being taken).

I agree with you, then, that Trotsky had "earned a right to present his case in the land he helped to create." Certainly, it was not Lenin's way of defeating a mistaken opponent. He did not lightly resort to administrative measures, to mechanical discipline, expulsion and deportation. His method was that of annihilating his opponent ideologically, of using him as an object lesson for exposing errors and clarifying sound views, of winning his followers, and even the champion of a wrong view himself by patient and energetic explanation and analysis. Lenin was not opposed, either, to the use of expulsion as a last resort for incurable violators of party decisions or those who had actually abandoned the fundamental principles of communism. But expulsion and other measures of

mechanical discipline were a last resort and not a substitute for tactical controversy.

I am prepared to admit then, that perhaps a wiser and more capable leadership might have saved Trotsky from his present path. But the fact is, I think, indisputable, that whatever the provocation, it does not justify, it merely helps to explain in a psychological sense his present uncommunist, nay anti-communist position. Today, whatever his subjective intentions may be, and I shall not try to judge them, his objective role is to mobilize labor sentiment against the Soviet Union. He has ordered his followers in France to enter the Socialist International. He has departed ever farther from Communist fundamentals, in his estimate of the Soviet State, in his attitude towards the Communist and Socialist Internationals. He has even come out for Civil War in the Soviet Union and thus become an open enemy of the class and land he once served so faithfully.

I am willing to grant you that he has had much provocation. But so have we of the Communist Opposition had much provocation. Against us too, lies and slanders and historical falsification and forgery have been used. We too have been expelled, villified, consciously provoked in an effort to make us desert Communism, go over to the Second International, or more openly to capitalism. Yet we have remained loyal to the principles of Communism in the face of all provocations. We have met slander with measured argument and analysis. We have continued to fight for the strengthening, the correction, the reunification of the Communist International. We have been the clearest and most effective opponents of Trotskyism (the Party slander-methods are not very effective) and the clearest and most effective explainers, popularizers and defenders of the Soviet Union. That is why I have to separate the names of Lovestone, Roy, and Wolfe from the name of Trotsky, which you have coupled with them in your letter.

And that is why the official faction of our party and international have not

been able to make their slanders stick against us. That is why they have had gradually to change the character of those slanders. (They are far less crude today). That is why they have had to enter into blocs with us in certain countries for common action. That is why they are compelled to tell us that the way is open for our return to the fold (if we will "acknowledge our errors"!). And that, plus the fact that our tactical line has been sound and our aims expressive of the real needs of the Communist movement, explains why bit by bit, shamefacedly, ineffectually, piecemeal, they have had to begin to adopt portions of our tactical program and acknowledge its

correctness, if only by the tribute of imitation.

And that is why we can feel confident that our fight will end, sooner or later, with our aims accomplished, with Communist unity achieved, with inner party democracy restored, with a sound tactical line, the line we have fought for and defended. And the fight will not have been in vain, for, with all its costs and losses it will have given its own reasonably sure guarantees of a sounder movement on a healthier basis. Then, to use the terms of your letter, we will have ended "a system which is capable of such mistakes. And, more important, . . . will prevent their possibility for the future."

Chapter VI

COMMUNISM AND AMERICANISM

(Answer to Question 9)

You say you are proud of what our country has stood for in the past? So are we. We are proud of the fierce resistance of the American colonials to British tyranny. Proud of the American Revolution. Proud of its role as inspirer of the French Revolution. Proud of the Declaration of Independence with its proclamation of the eternal right of the people to freedom, equality, control of their government, and the right to alter or even abolish their government whenever they feel that it does not serve their needs.

We are not proud of the Constitution rooted in privilege, property, slavery and distrust of the masses; but we are of the Bill of Rights forced into that document by the more revolutionary of our forefathers.

In 1931, we almost alone celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Liberator. Only we today remember with gratitude and understanding, and draw inspiration from the heroic struggles of Thaddeus Stevens and Wendell Phillips, and the leaders of the slave revolts, which in most histories go even unrecorded. The American government which commemorates the hun-

dredth anniversary of every little, piddling nobody and nothing, left the hundredth anniversary of the heroic deeds of those titans of our history, the abolitionists and Negro leaders of slave revolts, unpostage-stamped, uncoined, unmedalled, unexpositioned and unrecorded!

WE CLAIM THE HERITAGE

The Bill of Rights today belongs to us. The master class honors those rights today by their breach and not by their observance. That immortal document which proclaims the right of revolution, the Declaration of Independence, is outlawed by our present rulers. Communists are arrested for asserting that right. We can truly say to the Tory reactionaries today: We claim the heritage you reject. The tradition of progress is ours, not yours. The love of freedom is ours. The belief in equality is ours. We are definitely more consistent and truer guardians of the American heritage than you. You betray it. We defend it and seek to enlarge it. You reactionaries fight against the generous dream on which this land was built. We fight to make that dream a reality. You use the

past to block the present. We use the past to build the future.

AS TO THE FLAG

You think the American people are blindly attached to the Stars and Stripes, prize the symbol and reject the reality. Don't you believe it. We Americans are no exceptions. So were the colonials once attached to the British Union Jack. Under that flag they fought in the French and Indian wars. In 1763 they marched back, victorious in the last of those wars, drums beating, colors flying, heads high, proud of their status as freeborn Englishmen. Only twelve years later, Americans largely of the same generation, fired on the union jack at Lexington, bore a red flag with snake and pine tree at Bunker Hill, declared their independence at Philadelphia.

So were the Southerners proud of the Stars and Stripes. Yet they fired on them. Cheered another flag. And today are flying the stars and stripes again.

So the German masses have cheered the Imperial banner, then the Republican, and latterly in great numbers, the swastika flag. And in time, as surely as the sun will rise tomorrow, they will be rallying behind the red flag of proletarian revolution.

Or take the Russian people. Were they not attached to the "little father" and the church, the ikons and the flag? But when these came to symbolize in their minds all the things they hated: oppression, tyranny, starvation, imperialism, war, and when they learned to hate those things, they learned to hate their symbols, the very symbols they had revered so blindly. That was one of the signs of the revolutionization of the masses. They were rallying to other symbols because they were rallying to other things. The American masses still believe in the symbol because they do not yet sufficiently disbelieve in the things it stands for today.

AS TO LOVE OF COUNTRY

We Communists yield to no one in love of country. Country is not an empty word—country is a land inhabited by people. Those who pillage it, those who

exploit its inhabitants, those who make it hated abroad, those who spread misery in it, those who maintain poverty in the midst of its abundant plenty, those who prepare wars for it,—let them not talk of love of country! To them we are disloyal. To American capitalism and imperialism we are disloyal. To the interests of the great masses of American workingmen and working farmers, to the interests of the vast majority of the American people we are unswervingly loyal.

No one ever heard us voicing the treacherous slogan: "Our country right or wrong!" On the contrary, so long as we find anything wrong in "our" country we will fight like hell to set it right. And if I put the "our" in quotation marks now, it is on behalf of the great mass of Americans who do not own the country altho they have built it. In that sense, it is one of the aims of our movement to make the country "ours" without the quotation marks. There can be no task involving greater loyalty to the majority of the American people than this.

THE "NATIONAL PRIDE" OF THE COMMUNISTS

We Communists are not devoid of "national" pride. If I put the "national" in quotation marks, it is to indicate that our nation, like every nation, is not a unit. It has its class divisions, and every American must decide whether to be loyal to the great mass of American producers or to the little oligarchy of American money kings. It is a socially ignorant or scoundrelly use of the term "national" that seeks to conceal that fact.

And it is that awareness which characterizes our "national" pride. We are generally proud of the things of which the master class is ashamed and ashamed of the things of which they are proud. We are proud, as you have seen, of the traditions of the Revolution, proud of its role in world history, proud of the generous purpose of transcendentalism and its noble, if unavailing and unrealistic utopianism, of the broad equalitarianism of Whitman, the anti-plutocratic spirit of Jacksonian democracy and populism,

the unawed opposition of the "muckrakers" to the gigantic trusts, proud of the brighter pages in the history of the American labor movement. We are proud, too, of the fruitful genius and plenty-producing marvels of American inventiveness and technical achievement.

Therefore do we hate with a deep hatred all that is slavish and corrupt in our national life, all the "hoggish, cheating and bedbug qualities," as Walt Whitman called them, in the past and present of America. Therefore do we hate the abuse of the machine for the enslavement of man, in place of his emancipation. Therefore do we hate the humbuggery and demagoguery and corruption of present-day American government and politics. Therefore are we ashamed of the national auction sale of human welfare and happiness on the ignoble altar of the almighty dollar. Therefore do we scorn to see our land appear before the world as the hypocritical preparer of war in a smoke-cloud of unctuous pacifist phrases, as the brutal jailer of Latin America, the pawnbroker Uncle Shylock, the wielder of the big stick, the symbol of world reaction.

OUR INTERNATIONALISM

Today there can be no conflict between honest, worker-and-farmer-loyal nationalism and internationalism. The world is so interconnected in economy, in war and peace, in historic fate, that a separation from the economic and historic fate of the rest of the world is the dream of the ignorant and the rascally deception of the scoundrel.

The highest nationalism today is not the nationalism of a Hitler. He is disloyal to the interests of the masses of the German people. The highest nationalism today is, at the same time, internationalism. That is the nationalism of the Communists. It represents loyalty to the masses of our people, and their allies and comrades in arms, the masses everywhere. The real interests of our people coincide with the interests of the toilers and oppressed thruout the world. "Wall Street," a little handful of bankers and money kings, not only rules us; it tyrannizes over much of the world. Our struggle helps the masses elsewhere; their struggle helps us.

And even in that we are determined to be profoundly "national." We are determined to do our duty above all in "our own" country, to defeat "our own" master class. And we rejoice to know that history has given the American people a tremendous historic role, that in defeating our own master class, we defeat the most powerful and oppressive master class of all, plant the banner of freedom in the very center of the citadel of world capitalism and world reaction, and thereby America's workingmen and poor farmers make a tremendous contribution, not only to their own freedom, but to the freedom of all peoples thruout the world.

When you have thought thru your own declarations of loyalty, you will want to pitch in and help us make "America First" in the struggle for freedom, to put it again in the vanguard of the free peoples of the earth.

Chapter VII

LIBERALS AND COMMUNISTS

(Answer to Question 10)

You make a plea for broadmindedness.

To be broad-minded in the sense of training one's mind to examine the whole range of possibilities, take in all details, see things in their complexity and many-sidedness, be always in quest of allies, always receptive to new developments—

in that sense "broad-mindedness", amplitude of curiosity and criterion, is the duty of every revolutionist.

But that same breadth of vision must be inextricably linked up with singleness of purpose, surety of direction, intolerance of weakness and vacillation, sharpness of mental focus. Seeing every-

thing in relation to the central task of our time, sharpens the vision and clarifies the focus. Trying to see everything without orientation as to important and unimportant, relevant and irrelevant, blurs the vision and ultimately guarantees that you will see nothing straight. A broad man sharpened to a point, is a good revolutionist. A broad man without a point, or a narrow man without breadth—cannot make a good revolutionist. And if we see big things big and little things little, we will still have to recognize that of the two evils, the lesser is a man all point without breadth than a man with such "breadth" that he misses the point. So much for "broad-mindedness".

AS TO SINCERITY

The liberal, you tell me, is sincere. Some are; some aren't. Some liberals are muddleheads; some are myopics with diffused vision; some are time-serving chameleons with a gift for taking on a protective coloration according to their momentary surroundings; some are radicals in a process of degeneration into conservatives and some are embryonic radicals. Your penchant for liberalism, as your letter makes clear, is of the last type. It is liberalism on the road to becoming radicalism.

A bridge can be crossed in either direction. Liberalism influencing the radical movement is a bridge traversible only in the wrong direction, a road back, a path to degeneration. Liberalism infiltrating the conservative camp may be a bridge to radicalism. There are liberals and liberals.

You ask us to grant the sincerity of the liberals. To some of them we grant it freely. But sincerity in itself, while it is a personal virtue, is not necessarily a social one. Many a dangerous reactionary is sincere. Torquemada was no doubt terribly in earnest. Hoover was patently more sincere (more openly reactionary) than Roosevelt. Many a believer in Czarism, capitalism, imperialism, fascism, is sincere in his beliefs. Sincerity is an added, nay an essential virtue, if you are sincere about the right things. Sincerity in an opponent makes him easier to estimate and respect.

Shiftiness and insincerity we can never respect. But when I am told a man is sincere, that does not stop me from asking "Sincere for what?" Sincerity is a subjective matter; we are above all interested in an objective matter: the social philosophy and aims in which the sincerity is enlisted.

CONSERVATIVES, REACTIONARIES AND REVOLUTIONISTS

Socially speaking we can divide men into conservatives, reactionaries and revolutionaries. Any one of them may be sincere. A conservative, strictly speaking, is one who is satisfied with things as they are and wants to keep them so. Ideologically his views correspond to the needs of the ruling class, tho individually he may be poor as a church mouse.

A revolutionist is one who sees that things are radically wrong and need a fundamental social change. He is the champion of the needs of the progressive classes, above all the working class. A reactionary, in the literal sense of the term is also one who is not satisfied with things as they are. He wants to go, not forward but backward, to things as they used to be. Many of those who are called liberals today are really of this type. They are opposed to the domination of big business. They do not comprehend the inevitability of the development of large scale production. They lack the courage and understanding to press forward to the social ownership and control of these large social forces. They sigh for the good old days of petty industry and free competition. Such liberals, if they acquire influence over the labor movement, only blunt the fighting edge of its weapons and weaken its will to combat.

We have no sincerometers to measure their sincerity. We can measure their clarity of understanding and the soundness of their proposals. We can demonstrate that the task you set for them, "to make an impossible situation as tolerable as possible" is itself impossible in the period of capitalist decline, and that that "impossible situation", by its very nature, must become ever more intolerable.

WE QUESTION THEIR UNDERSTANDING

When the liberals of the Norris, LaFollette type oppose the growing nakedness and brutality of capitalist dictatorship, to a limited extent we can work with them. When they tell the workers to stay in the boss parties whose corruption they must know even if they are myopic enough not to grasp their class character and control, we consider them mischievous misleaders. When their "insurgency" consists of see-sawing perpetually between the two boss parties, we can have no use for such "independence". When they head a movement of revolt from the two party system, as did the elder LaFollette, only to head it off and, when it has spent its force, to lead it back into the fold again, we must fight them in order to further the political development of the working class. When they go to the Socialist Party and then, like the dog in the proverb to his vomit, return to the Republican Party again, as did LaGuardia and Blanshard,

we must either question their sincerity today or their sincerity when they declared themselves Socialists, or at any rate, their ability to understand the elementary meaning of the philosophy and platform they once professed. When they tell us the boss parties can be "reformed" (honest boss parties would be in no essential better for the workers than parties dishonestly, that is corruptly in the service of the bosses) we must expose their role as supporters of capitalism which today has corruption eating at the very heart of it. When they tell the workers capitalism is all right, all it needs is a few plaster patches on its sores, we must expose their ignorance of the society in which they live and their inability to be the leaders of men.

In short, we do not direct our fire in the main against the sincerity, or lack of it, of their measures, but against the ineffectualness of what they propose, the mischievous falsity of what they preach.

Chapter VIII

ON THE "RED TERROR"

(Answer to Question 11)

ON THE KIROFF CASE AND THE "RED TERROR"

Sergius Kiroff was president of the Leningrad Soviet, member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and a dearly beloved and capable leader of the Russian people. He was assassinated by a man who admitted, even boasted, that his motive was political and part of a general plot for the assassination of a number of Soviet leaders in the hope of upsetting the Stalin regime. The Russian State Political Police had been gathering evidence for months of a widespread network of emigres who had reentered the Soviet Union under passports of foreign governments or smuggled across Finnish, Lettish and Polish borders. They had further been watching a number of foreign spies and agents. They had made

no arrests as yet, but were waiting to unearth all connections. They delayed a little too long and it cost the life of Kiroff. This costly delay explains the removal of certain officials of the Political Police (OGPU) and also the swiftness with which they were able to make so many arrests and produce evidence against so many people.

THEY DON'T ALWAYS CARRY DOCUMENTS

Of course, it was not possible in all cases to produce proofs that were unchallenged by the accused or their sympathizers.

First, not every plotter is foolish enough to carry around documents, just so that uninformed or prejudiced foreign opinion may be satisfied that he was really guilty. Beginning with the aa-

assassination of Volodarsky and Uritsky and the shooting of the German Ambassador Count von Mirbach (this last in the hope of provoking a war with Germany), and the wounding of Lenin, and continuing to the plot of the British engineers and the assassination of Kiroff, the workers' government has been assailed again and again by these treacherous methods. And the attackers by now have enough experience to know how to cover their traces and are no longer so clumsy as to facilitate their own prosecution.

In the last analysis, any proofs published by any government must depend, in large measure for their credibility, on the questioner's trust in the good faith and justice of that government. If you lack that, what is to prevent you from saying that any and all documents and proofs are forgeries?

FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS INVOLVED

Second, the Soviet government was not willing to make public all documents and other proofs. In the present situation of international tension, some of these involving foreign governments would have brought on the danger of war. The governments in question would have "indignantly" denied the charges and demanded an apology and retraction to satisfy "wounded national honor". Yet, at least one diplomat was quietly and hastily withdrawn, and altho a number of foreign spies and agents of several countries were shot after a brief investigation, **no foreign government protested the execution of its citizens!** Does that not testify eloquently to the accuracy of the knowledge of the Political Police, and the justice of the executions in those particular cases?

HOWLS THAT SHOWED WHOSE PAW WAS CAUGHT

The howl set up in certain circles has a suspicious ring like that of a wolf-pack cheated of its prey. Not a peep from these people about the killing of Kiroff. Not a word of indignation at this form of attack upon the proletarian government. Even editorials putting the blame on the Soviet regime which "by

its nature provokes such actions". But when the proletarian government acts to defend itself and to strike terror into the hearts of the terrorists, then the chorus suddenly finds its voice.

Trace this voice back to its source and you will find the white guardist Russian emigre press openly advocating, predicting, promising the assassination of Soviet leaders for months before the deed was carried out. And after that murder, such words of approval as those in the *Harbin Vremya* of December 3, 1934.

"In the struggle against Bolshevism there is no room for ethics and humanity and everything is appropriate which weakens the Bolsheviks and strengthens the means of struggle against them. Therefore we do not wonder that among the appropriate means of struggle also individual terror appears from time to time, and various representatives of the Communist power fall victim to it."

A PRIESTLY BENEDICTION

And *Osservatore Romano*, papal organ, gave its benediction of the assassins in these words: "Not all blood-stained hands are called base; and not all murders—crimes."

Finally, what shall we think of the Trotskyite organ *De Arbeid* in Holland when it writes (December 22, 1934):

"If the shot of Nicolaeff (the assassin—B.D.W.) would at least result in the opening of the eyes of the Russian workers to the danger of this transition system (the Stalin regime is supposed to be a transition to capitalism in the eyes of the Trotskyites—B.D.W.), then this political assassination has had a good side!"

THE EQUIVOCAL POSITION OF TROTSKY

I do not for a moment wish to lump all these protestants together. I wish expressly to reject the insinuation that Trotsky plotted or desired the assassination of any Soviet leader. Yet I cannot overlook the fact that Trotsky has come out for civil war in the Soviet Union, declared even that it is already on. (See *The Militant*, August 26, 1933).

But a civil war needs great masses. When its advocates in the Soviet Union are reduced to a little handful, any efforts at carrying on a civil war that "is now on", can only be reduced to individual acts of sabotage and assassination.

If you were in Trotsky's shoes, would you not hasten to denounce the assassination of Kiroff and those responsible, in no uncertain terms? Would you find "explanations" bordering on apologetics? It is easy to prove that Trotsky knows better than he writes when he offers the excuse that such an assassination plot could only take place because of the nature of the Stalin regime. The whole history of such political murders from Uritsky to Kiroff, a history well known to him, gives him the lie.

Further, he knows better than he speaks when he charges that the reprisals were characteristic of Stalin and unheard of before he became the dominant leader. We of the Communist Opposition have had and have many uncomplimentary things to say about Stalin. But in all fairness it should be said that the shootings following the Kiroff murder were not something new in the history of the struggle of the Russian proletariat to maintain and consolidate its victory. The same methods of meeting the same type of provocation were employed in Lenin's day, when Trotsky was a power in the Soviet Government. The same arguments now raised by Thomas and Trotsky were then raised by Kautsky and brilliantly answered by Trotsky in a book that contributed much to my education, the pamphlet entitled "Terrorism and Communism". When Uritsky was murdered, when Von Mirbach was shot, when Lenin was wounded, each time executions on a far more extensive scale followed.

The trial of the Social Revolutionaries in 1922, the Party that plotted the two latter attacks, was preceded by a number of executions. Trotsky was at that time a member, the outstanding one, of the extraordinary commission with unlimited power that executed these people wholesale even before the formal trial began.

ON LEGAL FORMS

The real issue involved is one which Trotsky once explained so adequately, but has since, alas, forgotten. When a revolutionary government and a new social system are in danger, we cannot apply to it the legal standards that we have unconsciously derived from the procedure of a long established and unchallenged regime and social order. Attempts at assassination of its leaders to provoke counter-revolution and encourage foreign intervention and attack, cannot be treated as mere crimes of passion or simple infractions of a legal code. Each regime and social order, once stabilized and unchallenged, develops its own legality. Its neighbors, its whole population, even its criminals, recognize its social order and do not question it. But the bourgeois social order was born in revolutionary terror and took energetic measures of revolutionary defense. So it was in the French Revolution, Cromwell's Protectorate, the American Revolution, our Civil War and Reconstruction Period. But once its system is secure, unquestionably accepted and unchallenged, then it evolves a legal code of procedure for dealing not with attacks upon it as a system, but with infractions of its generally accepted rules. When the bourgeois order is faced with an immediate serious challenge by the proletariat, it returns to a regime of open force, this time not in the interests of progress but of reaction. So we cannot judge the Soviet's measures of defense against attack, beleaguered as it is by foreign and domestic enemies, in the same terms as we do America's handling of Dillinger or Hauptmann or Insull.

The Soviet Government had to choose between two courses: 1) to act swiftly and ruthlessly against those implicated so that the action should serve as a warning to all who entertained similar notions in the U.S.S.R. and abroad; or 2) to follow a slow, deliberate, cautious, ultra-judicial process which would be taken as a sign of weakness and signal for speeding up before the rest of the plotters should be grabbed. That it chose wisely is given indirect but interesting confirmation by the press comment cited above. And again it is con-

firmed by the estimate in the conservative French paper *Le Temps* which wrote.

"It should be stressed that the anti-bolshevik terrorism is obviously directed less toward the satisfaction of its hatred against the leaders of the revolution, than towards pressure against the relations between the Soviet regime and other lands. Proof of this can be found in the previous attempts on the lives of the German ambassador Mirbach, on the commander of the German troops in Kiev, Eichhorn, on Vorovsky, Ahrens and Voykov, and finally on the German consul Twardowski and the French President Doumer."

In conclusion then, whatever errors may have been made in the handling of this case are secondary in comparison with the dominant fact that an outstanding leader, high in the councils of the proletarian government was murdered as part of a plot against that government. The act was an act against the proletarian power. The dictatorship which in 1917 made the mistake of abolishing the death penalty prematurely and freeing General Krasnov on "his word of honor as a gentleman" only to have him lead one of the counter-revolutionary armies and take thousands of lives, has learned thru repeated attacks the costly lesson that it must act promptly, not merely to punish all the guilty, but much more to prevent the wider bloodshed of civil war and the recurrence of such crimes. In the Soviet code of justice, the most enlightened in the world, personal murders, petty thefts, etc., are treated as mental disorders. There is only one capital crime, a crime which attacks the workers' rule, which threatens to drown it in blood. From a social and historical

standpoint, firmness here is inexpensive indeed. The capitalist regimes in Europe take a far greater toll of lives in maintaining their inhuman systems than the Soviets have taken altogether to make a revolution and build a new world. Compare the present regime in Spain, in Germany, in Hungary. Every counter-revolution has taken a toll of thousands for every life taken by the revolutionary justice of the proletariat, and if the Soviet Government should relax its vigilance, it would mean that Russia would be bled white.

A WORD OF CRITICISM

With all this in mind, I must still indicate one criticism of the Stalin group in its handling of this case. It has attempted to exploit this incident in such a way as to use it as an insurance policy against all future opposition, even revolution-loyal, legitimate and constructive opposition within the party. It has made the claim that the Nicolaeff assassination is the "inevitable logic" of any opposition against Stalin and his group. Here Stalin shows once more one of his most serious shortcomings—his all-too-frequent degeneration from a party leader into a faction leader, his all-too-ready application of faction strategy to the solution of fundamental problems. But despite this, the *Workers Age* did not hesitate to endorse the general conduct of the case. Now that you have examined the evidence here offered, (and much more could be offered) I think you will agree that our second editorial, in its last paragraph (issue of January 5, 1935) if anything erred on the side of being over-critical, and that our two editorials of defense were essentially correct, and Norman Thomas's article of attack was fundamentally wrong.

Chapter IX

ON DEMONSTRATIONS AND MASS PICKETING

(Answer to Question 12)

First as to mass picketing. When a judge issues an injunction forbidding union officials to organize or workers to strike or picket, when the police pro-

ceed to club or haul in any one who tries to picket and the judge acts as accuser, judge and jury and sentences the pickets for lese majeste ("contempt of

court"—who wouldn't have contempt for such a court and such enslavement orders?)—there is only one recourse for the workingmen: to violate the injunction, to picket in such numbers, not twos or threes but hundreds and thousands, that the injunction is smashed and the strike is won. If we're not willing to do that, we might as well accept industrial serfdom in the first place, for courts, injunctions, police, guardsmen, private gunmen, clubs, gas bombs, are used in every significant strike.

AS TO MASS DEMONSTRATIONS

Mass demonstrations, too, have an important function. Throughout history they have been a means of expressing the popular will. It was a mass demonstration that began the attack on the Bastille. It was a mass demonstration that brought the King back to Paris as a hostage when he was plotting counter-revolution and foreign intervention at Versailles. A mass demonstration initiated every real step forward in the early stages of the French Revolution. In times of rapid advance, when great sections of the mass became politically awake for the first time, then the "people's representatives" in Parliamentary bodies prove unrepresentative indeed and government officials can be made to take a step forward only when they get a strong kick from behind, when they feel the pressure of the popular will.

The history of our own land should teach you better than to reject such manifestations of the popular will. A mass demonstration on Boston Common fired on by soldiers, went down in history as the Boston Massacre. The more progressive wing of the "fathers of the country" thought the right of mass demonstration important enough to force it into a reactionary Constitution as the first amendment in the Bill of Rights. Mass demonstrations of working men in England prevented the British government from coming to the support of the South during the Civil War. Mass demonstrations saved the life of Tom Mooney though they were not powerful enough to free him. Were it not for the

power of mass pressure the Scottsboro boys would long be rotting in their graves.

I will grant you that our Party's mass demonstrations have not always been all that they should be, that sometimes an adventurist policy has been pursued, that often it seemed as if an effort were being made to make them Communist demonstrations instead of mass demonstrations, that sometimes they have been held with a broad program and a narrow popular base whereas they should have only one or two elementary demands that millions can support,—a "narrow program" with a broad base. If you examine the issues of the *Revolutionary Age* (predecessor of the *Workers Age*) of April 7, May 1, and May 21, 1930, you will find criticism of adventurist tactics in ill-prepared mass demonstrations then being conducted by the Communist Party. But that does not signify for a moment the rejection of mass demonstrations. It is merely a discussion of measures for more effective mass demonstrations, better prepared, drawing in greater masses, leading them to further confidence and activity and harder for the police to attack or break up.

Nor is it correct to regard such demonstrations as having the aim of "getting off steam", or "creating martyrs", or "creating turmoil and confusion and riots." We will not call upon you to stick pins into policemen's horses nor bite their legs nor shout insults at the police. But you will be expected to recognize that mass demonstrations are a weapon of democracy in the most popular sense of that term, a speedy, impressive means of expressing the popular will, a way of curbing tyrannical governments and compelling officials to listen, a force for mobilization and demonstration of strength, a means of calling the attention of as yet inert masses to their own needs, a step towards greater political self-activity of the masses, at appropriate times a means of winning the neutrality or active support of sections of the army, militia and police, a transition at some stages to higher forms of popular political activity.

Chapter X

ON COMMUNIST DISCIPLINE

(Answer to Question 13)

The Communist Party should not be, as a recent number of the magazine *Communist International* (No. 19, 1934) declared, "a party of those who think alike and act alike." There are a few fundamentals in which all Communists think alike. They are:

1. Capitalism has outlived its historical usefulness.

2. Socialism should take its place.

3. This requires the winning of state power by the working class supported by the poor farmers and other allies of the workers.

4. Experience teaches that the ruling class will not give up its power without an armed struggle.

5. The workers cannot use the old machinery of capitalist government for their purposes any more than the bourgeoisie was able to use the feudal state forms. The workers will have to break up that state apparatus and construct their own on the basis of workers councils (Soviets).

6. The proletarian dictatorship is not permanent, but a transition form for the purpose of establishing a classless socialist society.

That is the fundamental program of Communism, and its acceptance, plus a willingness to work in an organized manner to bring it about, is all that a healthy Communist Party should require of its members. If you accept that program, you should join us. As to tactical matters, how best to realize that program, how to bring the working class a step, the next step, nearer to its achievement, in this there is room for difference. Not only room for difference, necessity, even inevitability of difference. The decisions of the party, especially where it is legal and free to meet readily for discussion, should be democratically arrived at by full discussion as the product

of the collective wisdom of its many members, but each bringing to the collective decision his own initiative, his own thoughts, his own experiences, observations, point of view. The collective wisdom in the long run is always superior to the wisdom of a single individual whether he be the latest recruit who may think he knows more than the whole party or the oldest and wisest leader. In fact, a party which exacts uniformity of details, unquestioning acceptance of all tactical proposals from on high, discussion only as to how to execute decisions, blind obedience to a leadership however capable, implicit faith that if it is quoted from Stalin or Lenin or Earl R. Browder it must be right, such a party is bound to make mistake after mistake and, far from furthering the fundamental program of Communism, is bound to injure it and hinder its progress.

Communist discipline, therefore, does not require you "to let some official party committee do your thinking for you." On the contrary, it expects you to do your own thinking and contribute to the collective thinking of the party. A blind follower can never be a good Communist. A party of blind followers with a few "omniscient, omnipotent, infallible" leaders, is bound to make mistakes. In the long run it cannot be a good Communist Party.

Of course, the Communist Party is not a debating club; it's a party of action. It must debate, then decide, then act; then, after a suitable trial, review its decisions and actions in the light of practical experience, or changing conditions. It cannot insist that its members should agree with all its decisions, **think** they are correct. That would be a ghastly caricature of discipline. It would produce puppets, not revolutionists. But it can and must insist that those who disagree subordinate their will to that of

the majority, and loyally carry out the decisions until they succeed in having them changed.

Unfortunately, the party today has forgotten these elementary truths and expels people for reservations, doubts,

disagreements, thoughts, even questions asked only at inner party meetings! Your attitude as expressed in your question comes far closer to a healthy communist attitude than that which prevails in the party today.

Chapter XI

WHAT'S TO BE DONE

(Answer to Question 14)

As to your postscript it provides an answer to your last query. You "do not question our basic beliefs and policy." You are "fully conscious of the defects of our capitalist system". You'd "like to see something done about it". You are "willing to make any reasonable sacrifice . . . if by so doing you can help put an end to the stark misery and suffering that you see all around you." You have had certain doubts and have raised them clearly and frankly and I have tried as frankly and clearly to answer them. If any of my answers leave you unconvinced, give your objections and I will try to meet them. My answers may not always be satisfactory to you but all your questions can be answered, for our position, I think, is impregnable. It is rooted in the highest cultural and social achievements of man. It is supported by and derived from the most advanced developments of philosophy, economics, social science, and the experience of history. The achievement of its aims represents the highest task to which a thinking, feeling person can devote himself today.

In the midst of the madness of hunger-producing plenty, of million-murdering war and civilization-strangling fascism, it represents the struggle for sanity; for individual sanity maintained by fighting the surrounding madness called capitalist civilization; for social sanity gained by the building of a saner world. The intellect that tells you there is something wrong, the heart that will not let you surrender to the heartless enjoyment of the "car and chauffeur" in the

midst of the charnel house that surrounds you, the reason that rebels at the irrationality of needless suffering and destruction and waste, they were not given to "fust in us unused." They will not let you rest. They led you from liberal to socialist, from socialist to questioner of communism.

You have one question left. You're afraid of the hopping abilities of the band-wagon boys. Here in all honesty I must tell you, I can give you no guarantees but the guarantees you give yourself. Join the Communist Opposition. Build it. Make it strong. Fashion it after your best instincts. Contribute to it your best wisdom. Bring to it the worthiest men and women you know. Help to shape it according to the honest fears and hopes that reveal themselves behind the hard-boiled wise-cracks in your letter. Help to build it right and keep it right. It is fighting for a healthier movement, free from the defects that have aroused your doubts. Its victory will mean a united Communist Party, a realistic party, a thinking, disciplined, self-critical, honest party, a party equal to the large tasks that history has thrust upon the American working class.

Your active support, your contribution to our thought and action, will help to strengthen our movement and, in proportion to your abilities and devotion, help to hasten the day of its victory.

So I answer your last question, "Where do I go from here?" with the words: "You join the Communist Opposition!"

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